



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Patricia Jursik, District 8

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SUPERVISOR JURSIK: SOFTBALL, BASEBALL DIAMONDS IN SOUTH SHORE PARKS SUFFER UNDER COUNTY EXECUTIVE CHRIS ABELE

She Says South Shore Diamonds Could Have Been Repaired With \$300,000 Surplus in Parks Revenue

Having lost two baseball and softball diamonds in Sheridan Park and all diamonds in Grant Park over the past several years, only three diamonds once remained in Cudahy Park for pick-up softball, a spontaneous game on fields not heavily -maintained. While a few other diamonds can be found scattered throughout the South Shore, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture has aggressively placed soccer fields throughout the area, especially in Grant Park and Cudahy Park, while removing our diamonds.

The Parks Dept. hosted two new beer gardens this year in the South Shore, stating they were wildly successful. For two years running, the Parks Dept. posted surpluses in these ventures, along with O'Donnell parking ramp revenues. Yet County Executive Chris Abele's Recommended 2016 Budget provided no details to the Committee on Finance, Personnel, and Audit for projected revenues from beer gardens or O'Donnell Park going forward.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, Cudahy Park lost its remaining diamonds after I had asked to retain what was left of them. The unit director, two days before leaving his position to take a new job, unilaterally and without notice removed the last diamonds available to neighborhood kids.

The Parks Dept. has become an enterprise under Abele, who only wants to run events that bring in revenue. But apparently that revenue cannot be used to improve parks amenities such as baseball and softball diamonds.

Dr. Raisa Koltun, Abele's Chief of Staff, questioned the non-tax levy spending in an amendment I proposed to replace our lost diamonds. Never mind that Abele hid the \$4 million for the arena debt. Koltun disputed this \$300,000 when it was Abele's administration that dictated what kind of sports our South Shore kids can play and ignored the duly elected representative's request.

Based on the hidden surpluses in Parks over the last two years and a lack of information about those surpluses, it was equitable to capture some of this beer garden revenue and the O'Donnell Park surplus to replace those diamonds, which were taken under less than transparent means.

I fight for my district and when the South Shore is being mistreated. It is my job to rectify our losses. I am proud of my budget amendment to replace those diamonds and can document the expected revenues from prior budget years, including a recent audit on O'Donnell Park that would have provided funding for the diamonds. I call on the full County Board to support my amendment.

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